

ADDRESS OF J. STROM THURMOND, GOVERNOR OF SOUTH  
CAROLINA, AND PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE OF STATES'  
RIGHTS DEMOCRATS, AT THE WATERMELON FESTIVAL,  
CHERRYVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA, JULY 31, 1948, 8:30  
P. M.

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Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen:

I appreciate more than I can tell you the privilege of being with you here in Cherryville tonight. I fell close to the people of North Carolina. The people of our two great States are like one people--their traditions are the same, their customs are the same, and they think and act alike. I appreciate the honor of being with you because I know that your hearts, like those of South Carolinians and other Southerners, are stirred tonight as they have not been stirred in four generations.

The North Carolinians gathered here are sons and daughters of American pioneers who helped to mold and shape our Union at its very beginning. Every freedom guaranteed in the United States Constitution was part and parcel of the very character of those early North Carolinians. It was North Carolina, in fact, who would not sign the Constitution until it had guaranteed that immortal principle, freedom of religion.

Yes, religious freedom was guaranteed, and all other rights of free Americans were made plain for the world to see. And since that time, the patriotic sons of North Carolina have never, for a moment, forgotten the freedoms for which they fought, bled, and died.

Because I know and love the people of this great State, and because I know of their devotion to those freedoms, I am confident they will be united with all other peoples of the South in this great crisis which is so important to us all.

It is because of a deep devotion to those Constitutional freedoms that I am here tonight. I come, not as an individual, but as the representative of many thousands of loyal Americans who recognize the dangers we face.

When that sacred contract among the States which we know as The United States Constitution was signed, our forefathers made



certain that it guaranteed a basic principle which could never be violated. That principle is the sovereignty of the separate States, the right of local self government, the freedom of the States to manage their own internal affairs.

✓ Remember, the original colonies came together to form "a more perfect Union." The original colonies or States once had all the power of government. They chose to surrender certain of these powers only in order to form a Union. This Union, in the words of the Constitution was to "establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity."

✓ But the powers they agreed to surrender to the United States Government are set out in plain language in Section VIII of the Constitution. There were 18 grants of specific power. When these were adopted, a sacred agreement among the States was completed. Each had the right to demand that all adhere to the agreement. But no one had a right to enlarge on the powers granted.

When that struggling young Federal Government was set up, many of its founders, including the great Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, feared that it might usurp the rights of the States in the years to come. They, therefore, guaranteed those rights for all time by writing Article X of the Bill of Rights, which is the crowning glory of our Constitution. It reads:

{ "The powers not granted to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively or to the people."

Those are the words of the Constitution. There is no plainer way to say it.

Yet, my friends, the political leaders of this nation, in both major parties, have forgotten that great law. They are engaged in a cheap political scramble to gain the votes of the minorities. To get those votes, they are willing to trample upon



the guarantees of the Constitution.

The politicians from the two major parties who are bidding for your votes today are mad with the lust for power. They have tasted the wild plums of power over the people, and their heads are hot with insane greed for more.

Let them taste the wild plums of power! Let them forget the laws that protect us! But let us tell them now that the American people know their madness, and that we will not stand for it.

The methods they have chosen to get that power are typical of the cheapest political tricks of which mankind is capable. They have hit upon a program filled with false promises which will appeal to the minority groups. It is a program so full of narcotics that the American people are in danger of being lulled to sleep by it.

They have named this program "Civil Rights."

When the so-called "civil Rights" demands of the President were first put forward back in February, they gained immediate support. But, where did that support come from? I'll tell you: it came from the smart little political tycoons who are working like beavers to turn this nation into a socialistic state. It came from those who favor a powerful and centralized government. It came from those who are dedicated to the proposition that Federal power should reach down and control every act of every American. It came from the advocates of a totalitarian, socialistic government, who are swarming like flies over the so-called Civil Rights program. It came from politicians, who do not care what happens to American liberty, so long as they remain in power.

Now, my friends, these politicians and their socialist friends are well aware that the program they propose to force upon us will mean a virtual revolution in the Southern states. They know that the measures they are trying to push through cannot be fostered upon the <sup>nation</sup> South without causing an upheaval that will be horrible beyond imagination. However, regardless of the issues, they have been taught to think of the South as always "in the bag". They think of us a forever prostrate before them--as miserable camp-followers of the big



city politicians. Therefore, they have chosen the South as a whipping-boy in an effort to gain minority votes. But, my friends, the South would not be worthy of its heritage, if it lay down and took this whipping any longer. [The rotten and degenerate political leaders are put on notice that we will no longer submit to such treatment, and that we are going to stand up and fight.]

The politicians have seen the South rising. The signs are all too plain. And in their feeble attempt to stop us, they are trying once again to fasten upon our cause the badges of bigotry, of racial hatreds, of dark prejudice. They are trying to convince the nation that the South is banded together to wipe out the rights of human beings.

Thus the politicians are pointing the finger of rebuke toward the South. They know that by so doing they can hide the real issues involved in the new force bill, called "Civil Rights." They believe that, by stirring up old embers, arousing old fears, and pouring salt into old wounds, they can throw a veil of secrecy around their lust for Federal power.

Can they do it?

I am here to tell you, that we are going to tear down that secret curtain, we're going to split wide open that veil of lies, and we are going to show them up before all the world for what they really are!

My friends, the South does not stand alone in this fight. There are millions of true Americans in every corner of this nation who know that the freedom of local self government is at stake. They are with us because they know that if this Federal steamroller is allowed to go its way unhindered, it will end by rolling over every right guaranteed in the Constitution. They know that if the proposals now being advocated are adopted, that the American form of government will be entirely changed.

The thousands of letters we have received from every State in the nation have proved that Americans who love their country and who love the freedoms it gives them, are getting ready for action.



Our people are alarmed, and here's why: Did you know that in the platforms of the two so-called "major political parties," there is not a single semblance of a guarantee of States' Rights? Now, this is nothing new for the Republicans. Historically, the Republican Party has stood for greater centralization in government. But listen to this: The platform adopted by the so-called Democrats at Philadelphia marks the first time the Democrats have not pledged themselves to protect the rights of States in 108 years. For the first time since 1840, there was no home rule pledge in our convention.

Well -- is it any wonder we went on to Birmingham?

And is it any wonder that the words spoken at Birmingham are being heard in every village in this nation?

Let me tell you just what this force bill called "Civil Rights" will mean, not only in the South, but in every State in the Union. Let us take up some of the proposals involved.

One of these is the Anti-Poll Tax Law. We all know that the poll-tax does not burden the right to vote. It is a minor revenue measure yielding comparatively little money, and I have advocated that we repeal it in my State. But let me say this and make it clear: I have not agreed, and I cannot agree, that the Federal Government has the right to force any State to abolish this tax if the people of that State want it.

If the Congress attempts to abolish the poll-tax, and thus extends its power over the suffrage of States, it will mean a form of Federal suffrage. This would enable a dictator who so desired to exercise absolute control over the ballot boxes of the nation.

I do not believe that the people of this State, or any other State in the nation, want a dictator telling them how to vote.

Another recommended law is that calling for Federal interference when a lynching occurs. In this instance, again, the politicians are trying to make use of the emotions of horror aroused



by the crime of lynching to force their false doctrines upon us. Is there anyone left who does not know that the South has almost wiped out lynching without outside assistance?

Lynching is murder. We all know that. And murder is a violation of State laws, punishable by State laws. If the Federal government is allowed to take over this State law, who can tell how many more State laws will be surrendered in the years to come?

The people of the South have shown that they are capable of handling the crime of lynching within their own courts, and we do not intend to let the Federal Government come in and take over our State courts.

Another proposal deals with the separation of the races. This proposal is being used to inflame the deepest emotions of our people. It is calculated to arouse hatreds so violent that Americans will forget the real rights of government that are at stake. It is intended to divide the people of the South, in order to gain political advantage over them.

My friends, we are not going to permit them to use this issue to cloud the real issue. We know that the problems of the individual States, whether they deal with race relations or not, must be dealt with according to the needs of those States.

When the politicians adopted this particular proposal, they picked up the most dangerous club ever held over the heads of the American people. If the segregation program of the President is enforced, the results in civil strife may be horrible beyond the imagination. Lawlessness will be rampant. Chaos will prevail. Our streets will be unsafe. And there will be the greatest breakdown of law enforcement in the history of the nation.

Let us also tell them, that in the South, the intermingling of the races in our homes, in our schools, and in our theatres is impractical and impossible.



Still another proposal is the FEPC Law, which would enable the Federal Government to invade a field clearly foreclosed to it by the Constitution. This law would strike at the very heart of the American system of free enterprise, completely destroying the right of private choice in employment. If the American people knew the full implications of the President's FEPC proposals, they would clean house in Washington from top to bottom.

The FEPC proposes to establish a Federal Commission which can summon an American businessman and any or all of his employes to testify before it, wherever it may wish. It may commandeer any or all private records of that businessman. And if the Commission finds that it does not like the employment methods of that businessman, it can force him to change his established customs, under threat of imprisonment and fine.

Unless that man is willing to hire the kind of people the FEPC tells him to, he must go to jail. And that is not all. If the Commission forces him to hire such persons, and if his employes object to working with them, then the Commission is empowered to take court action against each and every employee who objects. This could mean that a man working in a mill could be sent to jail or be forced to give up his job if he refused to work beside someone he did not like.

If this proposal becomes law, the words "private business" will be a thing of the past. If Stalin himself had proposed this law it could not have been more to the liking of the Communist Party. The FEPC is the nearest thing to Communism this nation has ever seen, and I do not believe the American people are going to accept it.

Another terrible feature of the so-called Civil Rights program is in the method proposed to enforce it. To carry out the proposals we have discussed, the President has directed that a nation - wide Federal police system be set up.

Under this system a network of Federal police would roam throughout the nation --not just in the South, mind you, but



in every State -- to police elections; to meddle in private business affairs; to spy into their private records; to intervene in private law suits; to keep our people in a state of fear and intimidation; and to bring to this country all the evils of a police state.

Does that sound like an American concept to you? My friends, we do not want a police state, and we are not going to have it!

Yes, that is the way the politicians who want a totalitarian system of government have chosen to force it upon us.

It is a sad commentary on the condition of the American government when you realize that, of the four candidates for President of the United States, three of them are in favor of this unconstitutional invasion of the rights of States.

Tom Dewey has already set up the FEPC in New York State.

Harry Truman is demanding that the so-called Civil Rights be forced upon every state.

And Henry Wallace is the Daddy of them all.

Let us not be fooled by the apparent differences among these three men, for in the matter of failure to protect States' Rights, they are birds of a feather flocking together.

When Thomas Jefferson wrote that great Bill of Rights, he thought it would protect us from Federal dictatorship. But he did not know, he could not know, the greed of the politicians of the 20th century. Jefferson believed that when an American took the oath as President of the United States, he would keep that oath and uphold the Constitution. But Jefferson could not have imagined that the greatest political office in the ~~gift~~ of all mankind would some day fall into the hands of a petty politician.

But wait. Maybe Jefferson did foresee this moment. Perhaps he did know that a time might come when politicians, in their greed, would overthrow the rights of States and lead us into totalitarianism. Yes, surely with the great vision that was part of his genius, Thomas Jefferson foresaw the year 1948. And, therefore, he wrote into the Constitution a guarantee of the rights



of States which would stand as a bulwark against dictatorship. We now see that the words of Jefferson in the Constitution were not written in vain!

Yes, we admit that the politicians won the first fall. At Philadelphia, we watched the Republican Party stumble on in its heedless way toward a centralized, totalitarian government, and nominate a man they did not want. At Philadelphia, we watched the gloomy, beaten delegates of the Democratic Party give way to the political blitzkreig of false leaders, and nominate a man they did not want!

But my friends, do not imagine for a moment that the fight stopped at Philadelphia. From there, democracy caught a train to Birmingham, and Americans found a way to act. We took the battle away from the politicians. We are taking it back to the people.

Now, as the South undertakes this fight, the thing that disappoints us most, is to see some of our so-called political leaders, who pretended to be against these proposals, turn right around and support the man who stabbed the South in the back. Politicians of this stripe -- these men with jellyfish backbones -- who merely give lip-service to the causes they represent, are unworthy to be called leaders. They have betrayed us. They are willing to barter away the rights of the South for a mess of political pottage.

These traitors in our midst deserve the censure of every right-thinking Southerner. The people will learn who they are, and in their wrath will rise up and repudiate them.

I think it is true that I have always been a good Democrat. But above loyalty to Party, I have always placed allegiance to country. It is a certainty that Dewey would have defeated Truman and would have been elected President if the States' Rights Democrats had not put forward their candidates. Since the States' Rights Democrats have actively entered the race, we believe that no candidate will receive a majority of the votes in the



electoral college and that the election will be thrown into the House of Representatives. This is the best method of defeating both Dewey and Truman.

The time limit for the States' Rights Democrats to get on the ticket in North Carolina is next Tuesday night. Every North Carolina citizen interested in seeing the States' Rights Democrats on the ticket in North Carolina, is requested to sign one of the petitions now being circulated. Persons interested in circulating petitions may get the form of the petition from the newspapers, copy it on a sheet of paper, and obtain as many signatures as possible. Petitions should be mailed to Colonel Philip S. Finn, P. O. Box 550, Burlington, North Carolina, so as to reach him by 4:00 o'clock, Tuesday, August 3.

We hope every person here tonight who has not already signed a petition, will do so before he leaves this meeting.

I love the South. I love the American way of life. I love the American form of government. Our government is superior to any on earth. In World War II, I fought under Eisenhower in Europe and under MacArthur in the Pacific to uphold the lofty principles of our government. I saw many brave Americans fall on the field of battle<sup>in</sup>. Instilled in me, however, was the cause for which we were fighting and to have a part in that struggle for freedom caused my heart to thrill with pride.

But, [ladies and gentlemen, I did not risk my life on the beaches of Normandy to come back to this country, and sit idly by, while a bunch of hack politicians whittles away your heritage and mine. As for me, I intend to fight!